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### NEW COPEMAN HEALTHCARE CENTRE IN EDMONTON, ALBERTA

#### ISSUE:

A new private clinic charging an annual membership fee in Edmonton, Alberta has recently opened (Copeman Healthcare Centre). Within the July 13, 2012 issue of the Metro, the Executive Director of this clinic, "SEC.17" made several comments that have caused some concerns for Alberta Health (AH) and will require further clarification.

#### KEY MESSAGES:

- The *Alberta Health Care Insurance Act* (AHCIA) prohibits any person from charging or collecting an amount for any goods or services or for the payment of an amount which is a condition to receiving an insured health service. The AHCIA also prohibits a physician or dentist from charging or collecting an amount in addition to the benefits payable under the Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan (AHCIP).
- This prohibition against charging fees for insured services under the Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan (AHCIP) applies regardless of the facility at which the services are provided, including privately-owned surgical clinics and private health facilities that offer a mix of health promotion, education and preventative health services.
- AH has completed investigations into the operation of two Calgary clinics to evaluate their compliance with the *Alberta Health Care Insurance Act* and the *Canada Health Act*. Copeman Healthcare Centre was investigated in 2009/2010 and Provital Health and

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**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

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**ANALYSIS:**

- Within the recent issue of the Metro, comments were made around the operations of the Edmonton location of the Copeman Healthcare Centre. These comments include:

1. *"Alberta Health is still billed for all procedures covered; part of the membership fee goes towards paying the doctor for additional time"*

**Issue:** Under the *Alberta Health Care Insurance Act* (AHCIA) no physician who provides insured services to a person shall charge or collect from any person an amount in addition to the benefits payable by the Minister for those insured services. The statement made by the Executive Director above raises serious concerns that the Copeman Healthcare Centre may be in contravention of the AHCIA since the membership fees may be considered extra-billing.

**Recommended Action:** Alberta Health will need to confirm exactly what the annual membership fee includes, and whether or not by charging these fees Copeman is violating provincial and federal legislation.

2. *"A typical family practitioner has anywhere from 2,000 to 3,000 patients and the Copeman doctors top out at 450"*

**Issue:** Under the AHCIA no person shall charge or collect from any person an amount for any goods or services or for the payment of which is a condition to receiving an insured service provided by a physician or dentist. The statement made by the Executive Director above indicates that Copeman may be violating this prohibition by voluntarily limiting their practice to only individuals who can pay the membership fee. Through previous correspondence, Health Canada has advised that under the *Canada Health Act*, Accessibility (Section 12), individuals shall not be denied access to insured health services if they refuse to pay membership fees.

**Recommended Action:**

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**BACKGROUND:**

- These types of private clinics claim to offer a model of health care delivery that is multi-disciplinary, collaborative, emphasizes illness prevention and health management services to its subscribing members.
- The annual membership fee at Copeman is \$3,900 for the first year and \$3,045 thereafter.
- There is also a Copeman Healthcare Centre in Calgary, which opened in September 2008. Alberta Health investigated this particular clinic in 2009/2010, following an inquiry from Health Canada.
- At that time, the Calgary clinic was found to be in compliance with the associated provincial (*Alberta Health Care Insurance Act*) and federal legislation (*Canada Health Act*). Health Canada was concerned at that time that these membership fees could be a financial barrier restricting access to insured services under the *Canada Health Act*.

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